

Auditions: Preparing and Performing

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Intended Audience: Music students preparing for collegiate music programs



All college music auditions are different. Some may be with just one person lasting only 15 minutes (like a mini-lesson). Some may be in front of a panel of faculty lasting over half an hour. Here are some tips to best prepare.

- ❖ **Establish a routine** – Stick to a practice regimen that includes a thorough warm-up prior to your etude, solo, and ensemble work. This will get you into shape especially if you are having an “off” playing day, and it provides you with a familiar routine to execute the morning of your audition.
- ❖ **Know your prepared pieces** - The evaluators will expect to hear your very best. The pieces you perform should display months of preparation (not days or weeks).
- ❖ **Know your scales** – All music majors need to eventually be fluent in all of their major and minor scales. Some music schools will not accept you if you do not know all of them at your audition. The sooner you learn all of your scales, the better off you will be.
- ❖ **Practice sight reading** – There will usually be some element of sight reading on a college audition. This allows the evaluators to see your note reading ability (especially in terms of rhythm). As part of your daily practice, do some random sight reading. It does not have to be lengthy. Do one or two lines of an etude book or solo, and that will last you several practice sessions.
- ❖ **Practice piano** – All music majors will be expected to learn basic keyboarding skills during undergraduate study. Some music schools will require you to be very proficient in the piano prior to your acceptance. Knowing at least the basics will help set you on a path of success.
- ❖ **Practice sight singing** – Even if voice is not your primary instrument, all music-majors sing in musicianship, theory, and aural skills courses. Singing notes on a page may very well be part of your audition.
- ❖ **Take some theory instruction** – if offered, take the music theory course at your high school. Find a summer music workshop that includes theory. Search for music theory on the web and find many free online lessons.
- ❖ **Ask ahead of time if they would like to hear secondary instruments** – Many music schools will want to see ALL you can do. If you are on the fence about your abilities on a secondary instrument, ask if they would like to hear it. Often if you are strong at your primary instrument, you can only help yourself, not hurt yourself by displaying a secondary talent.

- ❖ **Inquire about the format of the audition** – Since each audition is indeed different, it is not out of the ordinary for you to inquire about the specific procedures of each audition. You may be able to find much of this on the school's website. Any information you can gather will help ensure you have few surprises on audition day.
- ❖ **Connect with the music faculty prior to your audition** – Email or call the professor that will be your primary teacher. Let them know who you are. See if you can setup a tour and a lesson prior to your audition. Some may even offer this for no charge. This will enable you to see if this is a person from which you can really learn. It will also help the professors properly evaluate you if you have built a rapport with them ahead of time.
- ❖ **Have some questions** – Make a list of questions prior to your audition. Many of them will likely be answered throughout the day, but it is good to show your interest during any interview portion of the audition.
- ❖ **Get a good night's sleep** – Especially if you are traveling a long distance, take into account when you will be able to sleep. It's a horrible feeling not to do your best at something you have prepared for months and years simply due to some poor planning at the end.
- ❖ **Know why you want to be a music major** – If there is any sort of interview associated with the audition, you will likely be asked what you want to achieve with your music study. Do you want to teach music in the schools, perform on stage, go into music business or production, or something else? Being able to articulate your intentions will show you are goal-oriented and motivated to enter this competitive field.